UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/2000/NGO/33
10 February 2000
Original: ENGLISH AND
FRENCH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-sixth session
Item 11(g) of the provisional agenda

CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF: CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION TO MILITARY SERVICE

Written statement*/ submitted by War Resisters International, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[3 November 1999]

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*/ This written statement is issued, unedited, as received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION, DRAFT EVADERS AND DESERTERS

My organisation has made a survey of the situation of young people refusing military service in each country. The Title is : REFUSING TO BEAR ARMS. It can be obtained at WRI Office 5 Caledonian Road, London, England N1 9DX. It appears that the legal provisions and practices vary very widely from country to country.

A legal status for Conscientious Objectors and an alternative service exist in the European Union and in candidate states to the EU : Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland, Hungary and in the Baltic Republics :Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia. It appears also in some Eastern European countries : Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine,Yougoslavia, Croatia, Bosnia and in 2 Asian Moslem Republics :Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan.It appears also in Australia. In 3 countries, Paraguay, Russia, Bielarus there is an article in the constitution but no implementing law for a status on Conscientious Objection and alternative service.

In the rest of the world there are no legal provisions for refusing the military sevice. Those not responding to the call up are subjected to months or even years of prison. Those deserting the army are punished by many years of jail and even death in war time.

These condemnations are in contravention of article 3 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights which recognises the right to life, liberty and security of person. Those who reject the army refuse to put in danger the life of others and their own life.

These condemnations are also in contradiction of article 18 of the Universal Declaration and of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which acknowledges the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

The Commission on Human Rights has adopted resolution 1998/77 (E/CN4/1998/L93) which recognises the right to Conscientious Objection. My organisation urges that the resolution could be implemented in the legal provisions of each country and put into practice as soon as possible It cannot be admited any longer that so many young men throughout the world should endure such painful fate as they only want to refuse violence and bring peace to the world. Their message is **the abolition of armies** and it is high time to listen to them.